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DEPT FOR AF/SPG, A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON  
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DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: CDA MEETS WITH FORMER PRESIDENT MIRGHANI

Refs: A. Khartoum 509  
[1](#)B. Khartoum 325

[1](#)1. (U) On 17 April, CDA Fernandez met with former Sudanese President (1986-89) and Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) Deputy Ahmed Al-Mirghani, brother of DUP leader Mohamed Othman Al-Mirghani who remains in self-imposed exile in Cairo. Ahmed Al-Mirghani stated that the DUP (Mirghani faction) is keen to maintain strong relations with the West, especially the United States. He emphasized the DUP's roots in Sufi Islam (out of the Khatimiyya Order) as promoting a tolerant, inclusive, and pro-Western form of Islamic politics.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Mirghani, a trained economist, described the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) as a colossus that has tremendous power but is actually weak. He noted that Khartoum's surface flash and growth masks a grimmer reality, the gap between the center and the regions, the capital and the countryside. Despite the regime being awash in money because of oil revenues, ordinary Sudanese feel more and more squeezed by inflation and deteriorating services provided by a kleptocratic state.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The former President (who was overthrown in the coup that brought Omar al-Bashir to power) noted that Northern opposition parties should be able to confront the NCP but are constrained by a lack of a financial base to challenge them, after almost 20 years of NCP rule. He described the SPLM (who were the DUP's allies in the "National Democratic Alliance" before 2005) as having finally "woken up" in late 2007, after having ignored Northern opposition parties for over two years after the signing of the CPA. He thanked Charge Fernandez for pushing the message publicly that to transform Sudan, to help in Darfur or South Sudan, the heart of the problem - and the solution - is in Khartoum and reaching out to Northern opposition parties much more than before.

[1](#)4. (SBU) CDA Fernandez told Al-Mirghani that the USG will encourage a level-playing field ahead of the elections. He urged Al-Mirghani to ensure that the DUP keeps distance from the NCP and not fall prey to its destructive "divide and conquer" tactics prior to the elections. Responding to recent DUP member defections to NCP which received considerable press coverage in the pro-regime media, Al-Mirghani said, "these were not important people at all," noting that one "leader" was 84 years old and almost unknown, and "it's [the amount of press coverage] a bit of a joke." (Reftels) The CDA agreed that because the NCP controls the media, among other important resources, it has the ability to publicly play up such things to its advantage. As a way of encouraging democracy in Sudan, the CDA offered support to the DUP through continuous dialogue. Al-Mirghani was grateful for this offer of support. It was agreed that DUP would set up an event for the CDA to meet and speak with a larger number of DUP members in the coming weeks.

[1](#)5. (SBU) COMMENT: Divided now into three or four factions, the DUP is probably the most fractured of Sudan's traditional parties but

probably still has adherents, especially in Sudan's East and North. Any real electoral strategy for fully democratic polls in Sudan must indeed seek to give historically Northern, Arab, Muslim opposition parties a real chance to participate fully, speak out and challenge the NCP's false claim to represent what is actually a heterogeneous Arabic-speaking "Northern Sudan," not at all in NCP lock-step against an also illusory, united anti-Arab, Southern Sudan. Africa's largest country is much more complex than that. END COMMENT.

FERNANDEZ